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ASTROLOGY AND DEMOCRACY

On the last page of his admirable book, "Modern Democracies," Viscount Bryce writes: "There is an Eastern story of a king with an uncertain temper who desired his astrologer to discover from the stars when his death would come. The astrologer, having cast the horoscope, replied that he could not find the date, but had ascertained only this that the king's death would follow immediately on his own. So may it be said that Democracy will never perish till after Hope has perished."

The ascription of this story to an "Eastern" source puzzles me; for it is a familiar incident in the life of the Emperor Tiberius, the astrologer being Thrasyllus (Tacitus, Ann. VI, 21: Suetonius, Tib. 14: Cassius Dio, LV, 11). Practically the same story is related in "Quentin Durward" (Ch. XXIX), the characters being Louis XI of France and his astrologer Galeotti Martivalle, an Italian whose adventures had brought him into contact with the East, and who is therefore surrounded by oriental attributes. Indeed, Scott remarks in a note that "the same, or nearly the same story, is told of Tiberius," and proceeds to recount it, not quite accurately.

Now though we owe more to the East than we commonly suspect, Lord Bryce, in the course of his extraordinary life, has had a chance to forget more than most men ever knew. I wonder whether his story is not perhaps the Roman tale, recollected either from the original sources or from the version of Scott. In any case, it is *ben trovato*.

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VERGIL, ECLOGUE VIII, 39

alter ab undecimo . . . annus

Connington's note upon this passage reads thus: "Authorities were at one time divided on the question whether 'alter ab undecimo' meant the twelfth or the thirteenth, the former view being supported by Vives, Camerarius, Nannius, Sigonius, the elder Scaliger and Castalio; the latter by Servius, Eugraphius, Manutius and the younger Scaliger. See Taubmann's note. Modern editors have found little difficulty in deciding it to be the twelfth, considering 'alter' to be convertible with 'secundus,' but following the inclusive mode of counting. Comp. 'alter ab illo' 5.49; 'heros ab Achille secundus' Hos. 2S. 3.193. The Romans counted both inclusively and exclusively."

The meaning of "secundus ab undecimo" is undoubtedly "twelfth," but the explanation is unsatisfactory. May we not give "alter" its ordinary force of *the other* of two things considered? *The other* from the *eleventh* would be the twelfth in a progressing order. The confusion has arisen in part because of the use of "alter" as a synonym of "secundus" (second) and the fact that we have the idiom "secundus ab illo" "second to him," but this meaning of "secundus" is derived not from its meaning "second," paradoxical as it may sound, but from its meaning of "following" or "next to" and it is in this sense also that "alter ab illo" is to be taken.

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